

DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation's Brandywine Zoo introduces two new red pandas to the public

Meet Sherman – male red panda. Profile: outgoing, curious, loves to sleep in large buckets, very intelligent and fast learner, and will approach keepers to see what kind of food and enrichment they've brought him for the day.

WILMINGTON – DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation's Brandywine Zoo has made a red panda transfer and introduced two new pandas to the public. The zoo sent the panda predecessors to other zoos for breeding purposes, and Brandywine Zoo visitors are encouraged to welcome the newcomers to Delaware.



Meet Mohu – female red panda. Profile: shy but coming out of her shell daily, loves apples and grapes but is crazy about dried cranberries, and has more white on her face than Sherman.

The zoo's new residents are Sherman (above), a five-year-old male from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology institute in Virginia, and a four-year-old female, named Mohu (right), from the Blank Park Zoo in Iowa. Former resident sisters, Meridoc and Gansu, who have lived at the zoo since 2014, have been transferred to other accredited zoos, where they have been paired with mates.

Before Sherman and Mohu's arrival, zookeepers were informed about each animal's personality, dietary preferences, medical history, training techniques, and favorite enrichment activities. This helps the keepers make the transition as seamless as possible for the animals in their new home.

The transfer of red pandas is mandated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), which tracks animal populations in human care in American zoos. The SSP is coordinated by a specialist management group that follows the genetics and demographics of their respective animal populations. Annual meetings are held to examine the health of the population, and make recommendations for transfers and breeding.

The current red panda population in North American zoos includes 150 animals in 58 AZA-accredited facilities. All of the red pandas were captive-born. The median lifespan for red pandas is 10 years with some living to 20 years. Taking this information into consideration, with a desire to maintain the current population size, the management group has recommended 23 births next year. As a result, pandas, like sisters Meridoc and Gansu, are transferred among different zoos for breeding with unrelated pandas to ensure genetic diversity for the population.

In the wild, red pandas can be found in mountainous regions of China, India, Bhutan, and Nepal. They face threats of habitat loss from deforestation caused by commercial logging, demand for firewood, and clearing for agriculture. This has led to reduced food supply for the red pandas and habitat fragmentation that threatens their ability to move about their territories. Another threat is ongoing hunting of red pandas for pelts.

Sherman and Mohu are not a reproductive pair. Sherman has several offspring already, and Mohu is not a breeding female. In the future, the zoo plans to add a new red panda exhibit

that would allow for red panda breeding.

In addition to its newest residents, DNREC's Brandywine Zoo features Andean condors, river otters, pygmy goats, llamas, rheas, and other animals native to the Americas and the temperate areas of Asia.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, the Brandywine Zoo is one of only 200 accredited zoos and aquariums in North America, a distinction that marks its commitment to providing excellent animal welfare. The zoo is managed by the Division of Parks & Recreation with the support of the Delaware Zoological Society.

More information about the Brandywine Zoo is available at destateparks.com or brandywinezoo.org, or by calling 302-571-7747.